

**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL:**

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**HUMAN RIGHTS, CHECKS ON GOVERNMENT POWERS WEAKENED WORLDWIDE**

*More Countries Declined Than Improved in 2017-2018 WJP Rule of Law Index*

WASHINGTON, DC (31 January 2018) – The World Justice Project (WJP) today released the *2017-2018 WJP Rule of Law Index*<sup>®</sup> which measures rule of law adherence in 113 countries worldwide based on more than 110,000 household and 3,000 expert surveys. Featuring primary data, the *WJP Rule of Law Index* measures countries' rule of law performance across eight factors: Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice, and Criminal Justice.

Since the publication of the last *WJP Rule of Law Index* in October 2016, a majority of countries worldwide saw their scores decline in the areas of human rights, checks on government powers, and civil and criminal justice.

The greatest decline was seen in Factor 4, Fundamental Rights (71 countries dropped out of 113), which measures absence of discrimination, right to life and security, due process, freedom of expression and religion, right to privacy, freedom of association, and labor rights. The second greatest decline was seen in Factor 1, Constraints on Government Powers (64 countries dropped out of 113), which measures the extent to which those who govern are bound by law.

In addition, more countries' overall rule of law score declined (34%) than improved (29%) as compared to their 2016 *Index* scores—a troubling trend. Thirty-seven percent of countries' overall rule of law score remained the same.

“We are witnessing a global deterioration in fundamental aspects of the rule of law,” said William H. Neukom, WJP founder and CEO. “Reduced adherence to the rule of law anywhere threatens development everywhere.”

The biggest mover in this year's *WJP Rule of Law Index* (calculated by comparing countries against the 2016 rankings) was the Philippines, which fell 18 positions, now ranking 88<sup>th</sup> out of 113 countries overall and 13<sup>th</sup> out of 15 countries in the East Asia and Pacific region. The Philippines saw the most significant drops in Constraints on Government Powers, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, and Criminal Justice. In contrast, Burkina Faso, Kazakhstan, and Sri Lanka showed the biggest improvements in overall rank, each of whom improved by nine positions over their 2016 overall rule of law ranking.

The top three overall performers in the *2017-2018 WJP Rule of Law Index* were Denmark (1), Norway (2), and Finland (3); the bottom three were Afghanistan (111), Cambodia (112), and Venezuela (113). The top three and bottom three performing countries have not changed since the 2016 *Index*.

Countries leading their regions in overall rule of law scores included: Nepal (South Asia), Georgia (Eastern Europe and Central Asia); Ghana (Sub-Saharan Africa); Uruguay (Latin America and the Caribbean); United Arab Emirates (Middle East and North Africa); New Zealand (East Asia and Pacific), and Denmark (Western Europe and North America, defined as EU + EFTA + North America).

The *WJP Rule of Law Index*<sup>®</sup> is the world's leading source for original data on the rule of law. The *Index* relies on more than 110,000 household and 3,000 expert surveys to measure how the rule of law is experienced and perceived in practical, everyday situations by the general public worldwide. Performance is measured using 44 indicators across eight primary rule of law factors, each of which is scored and ranked globally and against regional and income peers: Constraints on Government Powers, Absence of Corruption, Open Government, Fundamental Rights, Order and Security, Regulatory Enforcement, Civil Justice, and Criminal Justice.

“Effective rule of law is the foundation for communities of equity, opportunity, and peace,” said William H. Neukom, WJP founder and CEO. “No country has achieved a perfect realization of the rule of law. The *WJP Rule of Law Index* is intended to be a first step in setting benchmarks, informing reforms, stimulating programs, and deepening appreciation and understanding for the foundational importance of the rule of law.”

#### **Regional Highlights:**

- **Globally**, countries in Western Europe and North America continue to top the *WJP Rule of Law Index*, followed by countries in the East Asia and Pacific region. On average, the South Asia region scored lowest.
- **Western Europe and North America** accounts for 8 of the top 10 places in the global rankings, with Denmark remaining the highest-ranked country of the 113 indexed countries, followed by Norway. Regionally, the most score declines were seen in Constraints on Government Powers, Fundamental Rights, and Criminal Justice, while the most improvements were seen in Open Government and Order and Security. Bulgaria was the lowest performer, dropping 2 positions in the global ranking to 55<sup>th</sup> place out of 113 countries worldwide.
- **Sub-Saharan Africa's** top performer is Ghana, supplanting South Africa from 2016 and taking 43<sup>rd</sup> place globally. Burkina Faso and Kenya saw the biggest improvement in rank among the 18 countries indexed in the region, climbing 9 and 5 spots respectively in the global rankings. Madagascar experienced the biggest decline in rank, dropping eight spots. Overall, the region showed the most improvements in Absence of Corruption, with four countries experiencing upward trends in this factor and none showing downward trends.
- **East Asia and Pacific** is the second-ranked region in rule of law, behind Western Europe and North America. New Zealand and Australia continue to be the top performers in the region, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> respectively out of 113 countries worldwide. However, more than two-thirds of countries in this region experienced a decrease in overall rule of law score. The

Philippines continued to drop significantly in the global ranks, falling 18 places to 88<sup>th</sup> out of 113 countries.

- **Eastern Europe and Central Asia's** leader in the Index is Georgia, ranking 38<sup>th</sup> out of 113 countries worldwide, though it has fallen 4 positions since 2016. Regionally, Kazakhstan showed the greatest improvement in rank, rising 9 positions to 64<sup>th</sup> place worldwide, while Belarus fell 8 spots to 65<sup>th</sup> place. The region showed a general decline in scores for Open Government and Fundamental Rights, with negative factor trends in 4 and 3 countries respectively. At the same time, the region showed a general improvement in Order and Security scores, with four countries in the region experiencing factor trends in that area.
- **Latin America and the Caribbean's** top performer in the Index is Uruguay at 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 113 countries, followed by Costa Rica and Chile. Suriname showed the biggest fall in rankings, moving down 10 places to 69<sup>th</sup> place out of 113 indexed countries worldwide. Three countries in the region experienced negative factor trends in Constraints on Government Powers, while three countries showed positive factor trends in Open Government. Finally, Venezuela once again had the lowest overall rule of law score among all 113 indexed countries.
- **Middle East and North Africa's** top performer among the 7 countries indexed in this region is the United Arab Emirates, ranking 32<sup>nd</sup> overall. Iran climbed 6 positions to 80<sup>th</sup>, while Morocco fell 7 positions to 67<sup>th</sup> out of 113 countries worldwide. Both Morocco and the United Arab Emirates showed statistically significant decreases in scores for Absence of Corruption.
- **South Asia's** top performer in the Index is Nepal, which rose 5 positions to 58<sup>th</sup> place out of 113 countries worldwide. With the exception of Afghanistan, which stayed in 111<sup>th</sup> place, all of the countries in this region improved in the global ranks. Sri Lanka improved the most dramatically, moving up 9 positions to 59<sup>th</sup> place out of 113 indexed countries.

The complete 2017-2018 report—including country profiles, data visualizations, methodology, and download options—is available on January 31 at: [www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index](http://www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index)

#### **ABOUT THE WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT:**

The World Justice Project (WJP) is an independent, multidisciplinary organization working to advance the rule of law worldwide. Effective rule of law reduces corruption, combats poverty and disease, and protects people from injustices large and small. It is the foundation for communities of equity, opportunity, and peace—underpinning development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights. Learn more at: [www.worldjusticeproject.org](http://www.worldjusticeproject.org)

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